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“WHILE, for personal salvation, simple ignorant faith and obedience may suffice, there is *limited* power for good and glory to God in such a life.” Such is a thoughtful remark recently made by a practical man. Is it true? Is anything else needed for a good degree of usefulness than the two qualities above named? Is not learning a useless or harmful incumbrance to the prophet of God? Is not a desire after wider knowledge on the part of the minister to be deprecated? So many seem to think. “It is dangerous to know too much.” To all who maintain such an opinion either directly or indirectly, the remark quoted at the head of this paragraph is commended, with a request for serious consideration.

THE same remark is also brought to the minds of the earnest laity of our churches. In these days of so abundant opportunities for extending one's knowledge of the Word of God, the thought has important bearings. When so much more may be known about the Bible, it is well to consider one's obligation to take advantage of these privileges. Do you think that what was good enough for the fathers is good enough for you? “It saved them and it will save me.” That is not the question. It is not a matter of salvation, but of usefulness and glory to God. The fathers were saved, but they did more than work for salvation. With their advantages they sought God's glory and men's good. If their desire for salvation is shared by their children, let their other desires also stimulate us. When the opening is given for making ourselves more

helpful to men and God, the question should not be "Ought I to undertake this new exertion"? but rather "Dare I avoid increasing my ability to bless the world and glorify God?" How all this applies to the study of the Bible—perhaps thoughtful and inquiring readers of this paragraph may be left to imagine.

A VERY interesting chapter in that fresh and thoughtful work, *Imago Christi*, is occupied with the delineation of Jesus Christ as a student of Scripture. It is suggested there that Jesus knew three languages, Aramaic, Greek and Hebrew. The two former were more or less native to Him; He picked up the knowledge of them by constant intercourse from His childhood with those who spoke them. With Hebrew the case was different. It is most probable that to acquire the knowledge of Hebrew He would have to study it as we study Latin. The significance of this fact is clearly brought out in the following extract:

It is surely interesting to think of Jesus learning the dead language in order to read the Word of God in the tongue in which it was written. Remember His condition in life was only that of a mechanic; and it may have been in the brief intervals of toil that He mastered the strange letters and forms that were to bring Him face to face with the Psalms as David wrote them and with the Prophecies as they flowed from the pen of Isaiah or Jeremiah. In our own country the same sacred ambition is not unknown. At all events, a generation ago there were working men who learned Greek with the grammar stuck on the loom in front of them that they might read the New Testament in the language in which it was written; and I have spoken with the members of a group of business men in Edinburgh who meet every Saturday to read the Greek Testament. Certainly there is a flavor about the Bible, when read in the language it was written in, which it loses more or less in every translation; and it is perhaps surprising that in our day, when the love of the Bible is so common and the means of learning are so accessible, the ambition to read it thus is not more widely spread.

THE remarkable activity in Semitic circles is the subject of frequent remark. Religious and even secular journals are full of articles on topics in this department of study. Young men of the highest talent are preparing themselves in all our universities to do "special" work in this line. Innumerable agencies and influences are to-day at work, when ten or twelve years ago all, or nearly all, was dead. What, now, will be the outcome? Is this activity an artificial one? Is it something which will shortly die out, leaving us just where we stood a decade since? Have more men turned themselves

toward Semitic work than can be provided for in this department? These are questions of interest not only to the men who are bending their thoughts in this direction, but as well to the entire biblical and scholarly world. Is it true that Indo-Germanic philology, literature and history in the future are not to receive that exclusive attention which has been accorded them in the past? or has the time finally come when the Semitic family, with its unique and wonderful literatures and histories, shall share, and that permanently, the favor of students and scholars?

IF a sufficiently comprehensive survey of the situation be taken, the answer to the questions just asked is easily obtained. (1) There are hundreds of Babylonian and Assyrian inscriptions published, which are as yet uninterpreted; thousands which have been unearthed, which are, as yet, unpublished; tens of thousands of such inscriptions which still lie buried in the ruins of antiquity's great cities awaiting the explorer's pick and shovel. (2) There are scores of Arabic inscriptions, dating from many centuries B.C., which have been published, but are not yet fully understood; hundreds, which are to-day in the hands of explorers, awaiting the funds necessary to publish them; and, we are assured, thousands engraved on the rocks of Arabia, which have not yet been seen by the eye of civilized man, and containing secrets of the past history of that strange country, for the possession of which men are willing to risk their lives, if only the necessary means can be obtained for the prosecution of the work. (3) There are great collections of inscriptions in a tongue not yet deciphered, relating, it is believed by all, to a mighty empire of the past, the Hittite, which had all but dropped from the knowledge of man,—inscriptions which are, to be sure, non-Semitic, but which must be read, if read at all, by Semitic scholars. (4) There are Aramaic, Phœnician, and other inscriptions and remains without number and of unknown value which are yet to be explained.

THERE are yet (5) to be written the first Semitic comparative grammar, and the first Assyrian lexicon; there is in the

English language no Hebrew lexicon worthy of the name ; with one or two exceptions there are no edited texts of the various Old Testament Books for the use of students ; while for scientific grammars of many of these languages, and for carefully prepared glossaries of different works, there is the greatest need ; Semitic philology has but made a beginning. (6) The scope of the different literatures and histories of this great family is not yet understood ; for in many languages a large portion of the literature has not been read, and that which has been read and is best known presents unsettled questions which lie at the basis of the history of all past ages ; for example, Did an Accadian civilization precede the Semitic civilization, from which the latter was, in good part, derived ? Was the Israelitish civilization unique, or one of many ? Was the Israelitish legislation directly God-given, or the result of the working out of a God-directed history.

AND (7) as to the religions of these various tribes, for they were really tribes, rather than nations, so close is the relationship, what is yet known ? Almost nothing. In reference to Israel's religion, with which we have been accustomed to suppose ourselves well acquainted, the unknown, or at all events, the uncertain element—that which deserves and demands investigation—is larger than many of us, to whom the real facts are as yet new, may be willing to allow. It is not too much to say that the history of Israel's religious institutions is still to be written. Nor can this be done until our knowledge is more definite concerning the other great Semitic religions, from which Israel is, to be sure, distinctly separated by the line which separates the human from the divine, but with which, after all, it had much, yes, very much, in common.

FINALLY, (8) within a few years, men have begun to talk of a *Biblical* theology, as distinguished from dogmatic theology. In this, in some respects the highest and most vital department of Semitic work, a broad field opens out to view, a field of which the smallest portion only has as yet been tilled.

Here contributions of philology, of literature, of history, of interpretation, from all the Semitic nations, are to be brought, that by their aid there may be comprehended the history of the revelation of God, as it began and continued and concluded in connection with the chosen nation. How much might be added to the above will be appreciated even by those who have just entered upon such lines of work. Can any one claim that there is a lack of work to be done? Is it likely that a department with such unexplored fields, such unsettled questions—questions, too, sustaining so vital a relation to the interests of mankind, will fall into decline? Is it not rather destined to assume relatively a far higher position than that which it now occupies? But another side of the question remains to be considered.

THE time has come in America when such a thing as university work, in the proper sense of the term, is possible. In the leading universities the work of investigation is now being taken up. The older, and some of the younger, institutions devote a large share of their energy to investigation, as distinguished from mere teaching. Chairs in Semitic languages will increase and not diminish in number. Where there are five such chairs to-day, there will be twenty a dozen years hence. To fill such a chair long years of study and toil are necessary; but there is a reward in the end for him who has courage to press on.

IN former days the entire Biblical department was represented in the theological school by one man. It was found necessary, after a while, to divide and to make the Old Testament the work of a separate professorship. Within a few years the necessity has arisen in some institutions of dividing also the Old Testament department, and of assigning to one professor the linguistic and literary work, to another the historical and exegetical. As theological institutions grow in wealth and in the number of their students, the subdivision will be made in one after another, until the time will come when it will be as much of an anomaly for one man to cover

the whole Old Testament field as it now seems to be for one man to attempt to cover the entire Bible. Men who have been specially fitted will be in demand for these positions.

A FEW schools of divinity have established the chair of Biblical theology. The value of this work, the real necessity of it is now pretty generally appreciated. Within a little while the chair will be deemed as necessary a part of a seminary's equipment as the professorship of Dogmatic theology. The preparation for it must be broad and deep. To teach Biblical theology of the Old Testament without a thorough knowledge of the languages and literature and history of the principal Semitic nations would be as absurd as that a college professor should teach Homer who did not know Greek. A score or more of such chairs will be ready for occupants within ten or twelve years.

IT IS no uncertain sign of the times that the college world, as distinguished from the university and the divinity school, is awaking to an appreciation of that most serious blunder in the American education of the last half-century, viz., the virtual ignoring of the Bible as a subject to be included in the curriculum of study. So egregious has been the oversight, that, now, the real situation being seen, no time will be lost in rectifying the mistake. In one or two colleges chairs of Biblical literature have been founded with good endowments. In at least eight colleges efforts are at this very time being made to secure endowments. Such work must find a place not only in denominational colleges (think of a christian college with no opportunity for instruction in the Bible,—how can such an institution face its constituency?) but also in the state universities, in some of which steps have already been taken in this direction. Where are the men who are to fill these positions? It is not supposable that this work can be done by the professor of Latin, or the professor of Greek; the professors in these departments are, as such, no better able to teach Biblical literature than they are to teach mathematics or chemistry. The work can be done only by men specially

prepared for it. Who can estimate the demand which must be supplied in this line alone within the coming years?

BUT it is not only in the university, the divinity school and the college that men trained in Semitic work will be needed. There is a field still broader. The Gospel minister of the future is to be pre-eminently a *teacher*. Everything, to-day, points in this direction. If the Bible is to exert the greatest possible influence, it must be taught. The pastor is the divinely-appointed agent for conveying to the people such instruction. He, of all persons, is, or ought to be, best able to do it. He must, at least, train the teachers of his church for this important service. Since so large a part of this instruction is in a Semitic field—and here belongs not only the Old Testament, which is Semitic in both contents and form, but also the New Testament, which is Semitic in thought, though not in form—it becomes necessary for the minister to be familiar with Semitic material. The minister of the present generation who is ignorant of everything which makes a true understanding of the Old Testament possible, and, as some have done, boasts of this ignorance, may be pitied and pardoned. The minister of the coming generation who neglects afforded opportunities and follows this example will be a fit subject for rebuke and contempt. In the ranks of the ministry, therefore, there will be a demand for broad and careful training in Semitic subjects. There has always been such a demand; but it will increase one hundred fold within twenty-five years.

Is it likely, we ask again, that the present Semitic activity is one which will shortly die out? It may rather be said, and that, too, in all sober earnestness, that the development which has marked the last decade is but the beginning of a beginning, the end of which is beyond the possibility of human calculation.